

The Strengths Approach to our work and our life in Kindergartens and everywhere!

Bernadette Glass

The bottom half of the slide features a solid blue background. Overlaid on this background are several white, concentric circular ripple patterns, resembling ripples in water, scattered across the lower portion of the slide.

The Strengths Approach

1. Explores the philosophy of 'power over' and 'power with'
2. Power over occurs when an individual, group or institution assumes the right to control others
3. 'Power with' occurs when a partnership is characterised by
 1. Respect
 2. Self responsibility
 3. Transparency
 4. Sharing
 5. Collaboration
4. Acknowledges that change and growth happens in a safe and respectful environment in which self empowerment is encouraged.

Wayne McCashen 2005 *The Strengths Approach*: A strengths-based resource for sharing power and creating change.
St Luke's Innovative Resources

Partnership

- **Respect:** for peoples' intrinsic worth, capacities, uniqueness and communalities
- **Sharing:** of information and 'knowledge', resources, skills, decision-making
- **Collaboration:** teamwork, consultation and inclusion
- **Transparency:** having things out in the open; open information and communication

The Strengths Approach

The Strengths Approach asserts that:

- All people have strengths and capacities
- People can change
- People change and grow from the discovery, reminding or awakening of their strengths and capacities, that develop even a slight awareness of what is possible
- People are experts on their own situation
- The problem is the problem, the person is not the problem
- Problems can blind people from noticing and appreciating their strengths and their capacity to find solutions

Personal/Cultural Constraints to Power With

Personal Attitudes & Beliefs

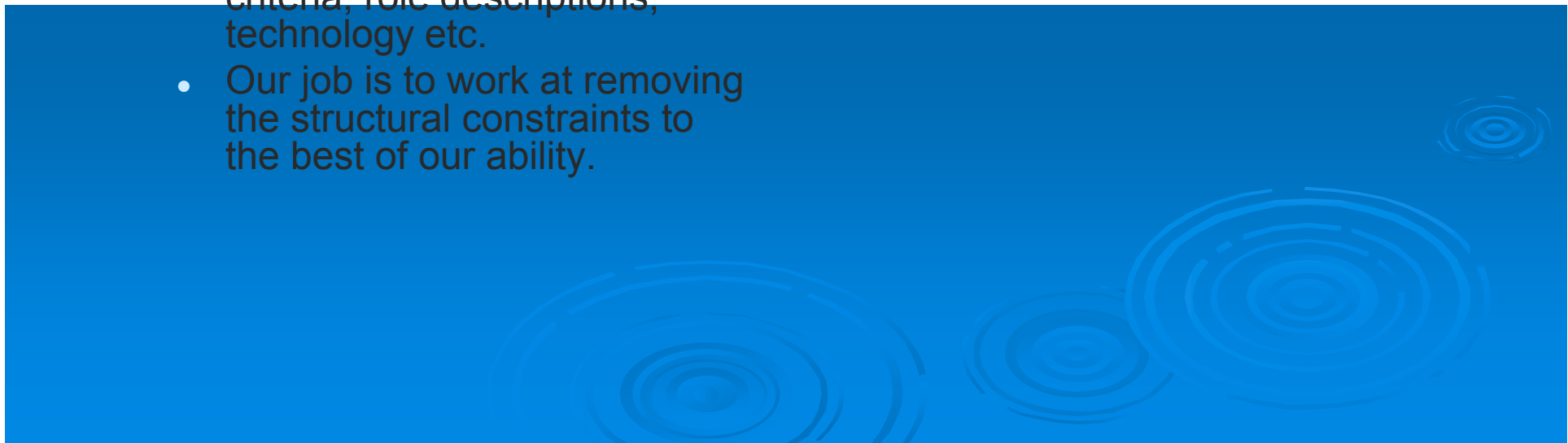
- The way I see myself, others & the world, traditions, myths etc
- For example:
- People can't change
- I have superior knowledge, resources, information & experience
- Professional's know what's best

If I am in a position of power I can use this power over others and form a culture where others are expected to conform to my beliefs and attitudes. These expectations can be subtle or obvious

Our job is to reflect upon attitudes and beliefs and to develop an awareness of their impact

Structural Constraints to Power With

- Those aspects of organisational structures which prevent us from offering the most useful/effective partnerships with each other or our clients
- For example
 - Funding, other resources, geography, time, rosters, physical barriers, eligibility criteria, role descriptions, technology etc.
 - Our job is to work at removing the structural constraints to the best of our ability.



Solution Focused Conversations

What are the issues here?

- What do you/we want to happen or to be different?
- How will that make a difference? (what's meaningful?)
- What strengths do you/we use now or have we in the past, that can help now?
- Where is what you/we want, happening, even a little bit now? Or where has it happened in the past?
(seeking exceptions to the problem i.e.- when the problem is absent or less of a problem)
- What would it take for that to happen again/more? (Highlight strengths & resources)
- On a scale of 1-10, how motivated are you/we to try?
1=least & 10= most
- What may be a step you could take?

The Process

1. Hearing the story and clarifying the issues
2. Developing a picture of the future and goal setting
3. Exploring and identifying strengths and exceptions
4. Identifying additional resources through a plan of action based on goals, strengths and resources
5. Mobilising strengths and resources through a plan of action based on goals, strengths and resources
6. Reviewing and reflecting on a progress and experiences



Your Kindergarten

1. What are the principles of your organisation?
2. What structures and active processes are in place to reflect these principles for all members of the kindergarten community?
3. How does your kindergarten 'do' inclusion of the most marginalised?
4. What would you want children, families, staff and others, to say about you as a worker, committee member, parent when you meet them in the future?

- Our job is to create or to contribute to a culture in which the child, and each member of the kindergarten community, can grow into the most full expression of themselves
- Our job is to name any type of oppression of our children and each other and work towards its elimination
- Our job is to create and model a mutually respectful workplace



What can I do?

I can:

- Self reflect
- Speak my truth
- Be honest about my beliefs and prejudices
- Heal or harm by my thoughts feelings and actions
- Keep connected not attached to outcomes
- Let the angst spin outside, not inside me
- Decide if this is the environment I want to be part of
- Be responsible for myself and my choices
- Contribute to changing what I can in my own circle of influence

Ponder on...

- Am I Self aware and caring for myself?
- Am I making a conscious contribution to meet others in 'equalness'?
- Am I giving my power away?
- Am I understanding what I can and can't change?
- Am I imposing on others in a power over way?
- Am I clear about my role and professional boundaries?
- Am I claiming my self and my role?
- Am I reviewing and evaluating my contribution and effectiveness and that of the service?
- Am I making necessary positive changes for continued growth and change in myself and for the service?
- Am I encouraging others to take responsibility for themselves and to speak their own truth?
- Am I advocating for resources for children and the families?